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 Date 8 May 1991

# Webster Profile

By W. DALE NELSON

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - The retirement of Central Intelligence Director William H. Webster, described as an official who "exudes a certain serenity," will conclude a government career spanning stints as a prosecutor, judge and head of the nation's top law enforcement agency.

"He has performed with great distinction and the best service to his country," President Bush said today in announcing Webster's decision to retire.

Helmut Sonnenfeldt, a Brookings Institution scholar and authority on intelligence, said, "It has been a pretty calm tenure for the CIA director, and I think it has to do with his temperament and his standing."

Sonnenfeldt said Webster appeared to have cultivated good relations with members of Congress and "wasn't considered as political" as his predecessor, the late William J. Casey.

"He isn't a political activist and he sort of exudes a certain serenity," said Sonnenfeldt, who has served in the State Department in both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Webster received similar praise when he came to Washington in 1978 to head the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"He reasons well. He's oriented to facts," Attorney General Griffin Bell said at the time.

In announcing his plan to retire, Webster said, "I know I'm leaving you a healthy organization. We have positioned ourselves for the challenges of the 90s, which are different from the challenges of the 80s."

He took over the Central Intelligence Agency in 1987 when it was in turmoil following the Iran-Contra scandal. Webster was named to the post when Casey resigned after undergoing surgery for a brain tumor.

Webster earned a good reputation in nine years as head of the FBI, instituting tough rules against misconduct at the agency. He performed similarly at the CIA, easing the agency out of the critical spotlight.

Webster personally supervised the Abscam investigation of members of Congress, in which FBI agents posed as Arab businessmen seeking political favors.

Although selected as FBI head by President Jimmy Carter, Webster is a Republican who had previously served as a U.S. attorney and federal appellate judge in St. Louis.

Webster was born March 6, 1924. He grew up in Webster Groves, Ill. He served in the Naval Reserve from 1943 to 1946 and 1950 to 1952. He graduated from Amherst College and obtained a law degree from Washington University.